

Dear Honorable Judge Leonie M. Brinkema,

My name is William Alfred Kuehner Jr. I'm a 24-year veteran of the U.S. Navy and I currently work at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard as GS-12 in Bremerton WA. I am assigned to a Project Team that plans and executes Nuclear Aircraft Carriers Availabilities. I am the father of Christopher William Kuehner and I'm aware of the charges he was found guilty of. We, my wife and I, have been by my son's side since he was apprehended. I am writing in support of Christopher and, to tell you I'm a little disappointed in him for putting himself in this position would be an understatement. This kind of conduct is not my son. But nevertheless, he is my son and I love him.

Chris has always been a happy and intelligent kid. Due to the fact he was raised as a military child, he would make friends easily. At one time he could speak several languages, he even spoke Cantonese before he spoke English. Then in the third grade, he started to learn German. We lived in Japan with him from the age of 2 to 12, where he was involved with Cub Scouts and Webelos through out our tour.

In 1996 we moved to Bremerton, WA. He had a normal life here, with the exception that I would be gone a lot for work until I retired in 2003. All through his high school years I was gone, and he took the roll on as the man of the house. His mom doesn't drive and sometimes doesn't understand English very well. So, he had to take care of her and his little sister. He took them to appointments, helped his mom with the bills and home emergencies, and he would help his sister with homework. Chris was really involved in NROTC at the high school. He was even selected to participate in the annual Armed Forces Day in 2001. When he was 12, we went to a museum at Ft. Lewis. Once we got through it, he said he wanted to join the Army. So, in 2003, he did and, of course, I was at sea when he left for boot camp. For me, since I retired from the military a month later, "he took over the watch".

As I said before, Chris makes friend easily. One of his friends, Guy Venner, have been friends from the time we moved to the United States and today they are still the best of friends. Chris is always there for his friends. He gives his time and, more times than we would like, money if they need it; often when he was short himself and he has ever asked for anything in return.

After Chris separated from the Army and went through his divorce, I noticed a little change in him. While he would be normal with us every day, but he would never talk about his issues. Chris wears his heart on his sleeve and trusts people to be who they say they are, which has hurt him because he got taken advantage of so many times. This has costed him so much not just in money but with his mental health. I think that Chris having to be the man of the house while I was gone made him believe that, he as a man, should take care of everything on his own. He was able to get to a new normal for him through helping people, mostly other Veterans. I think this helps him with his own PTSD. One of the veterans and friends, Jeremy, is one I know he has helped significantly. Jeremy himself, told me that Chris saved his life and until Chris was arrested, he would call Chris every day and to let him know he took his medication. Chris would often always load up his car and take several veterans, about two to three times a week, to American Lake which is a VA hospital that is roughly an hour away from where we live. After recently getting a Power of Attorney from him, we found that he has sent thousands of dollars to other friends/combat buddies to help with getting them back on their feet or help with their legal issues. That's how Chris has always been, always taking care of others before himself. Even over the last couple of years when I would travel for work and be out of the country for about 6 to 7 months, he is the sole caretaker of his mother. He takes her anywhere she needs to go, including to her appointments which are normally an hour's drive from our home.

I know there is no excuse for what has happened, but I wanted to give you an idea of what Chris was going through during the time of the charged offense. In early 2020, my wife's health was very bad, and we were told it might have been cancer. The world shutdown due to COVID and we waited a long time for the result of whether she had cancer or not. While the results were that she did not have cancer but in fact had thyroid issues, it was difficult to watch her deteriorate before she started to get a little better. In early October, Chris tried to take care of her the best he could considering COVID restrictions in Washington were still in place, as I had to travel to Japan for work and spent 21 days in isolation with limited contact with my family. His best friend's, Guy, house had burned down, and he felt like he couldn't help his friend. Being in isolation himself, stuck in his apartment, he stopped taking care of himself and gained 60 pounds. He previously suffered from back pain, and this made it worse, and he told me he was trying to get an appointment with the VA to help but they could not see him because of COVID. I think because of all of this, being without his normal support system, he looked for a friend in the wrong place. As my wife she recovered a little, in early November she went to visit our daughter in California. A few days later, she was taken to the hospital the night of Nov 14, where they said she was within two hours of kidney failure and would have died if she had not gone to the hospital. 2020 was very difficult for everyone because of COVID, but it was even worse for Chris because of everything that was going on in his personal life and he could not be physically with the people he loved, to help.

His incarceration has already affected his life. He was just 4 credits short of earning his BA in Business; he was enrolled in college courses even while going through trial. Because Chris was 100% disabled and he had a lot of knowledge of the VA system, he was looking for a job within the VA so that he could still help other veterans in his community. As I am still working and traveling, and he is the sole person to help his mother while I am gone. Knowing that there is a minimum sentence of 20 years, it is very likely with my wife's, and I age, we may very well not be alive when he is released. I believe he knows how much hurt he has caused. I know that he made a mistake in such a short time period and has ruin his life, well beyond his incarceration. After that short period of time, he has, in that last two years, been a modeled citizen. Still helping people and supporting his friends and college mates.

I am sorry if this is hard to understand, as I am not the best writer and my wife has not written a letter due to her own language barriers, but I know that she will support Christopher with all heart. I hope that this better helps you understand Chris and who he really is.

Sincerely,

William Alfred Kuehner Jr.